

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L. D. 679**

**“RESOLVE, REGARDING THE MANAGAMENT OF MAINE’S BROOK
TROUT AND LANDLOCKED SALMON RESOURCES”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative Hubbell of Bangor

**CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative CASSIDY of Lubec
Representative EVANGELOS of Friendship
Senator HASKELL of Cumberland
Representative KUSIAK of Fairfield
Senator LANGLEY of Hancock
Representative MAKER of Calais
Representative McCABE of Skowhegan
Representative SHORT of Pittsfield**

DATE OF HEARING: April 9, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am John Boland, Director of the Bureau of Resource Management at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 679**.

L.D. 679 directs the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to examine certain issues with respect to the current status of brook trout and landlocked salmon in the state and recommend policies and develop a state-wide plan to address each issue. These items include increasing and attaining a greater economic benefit from the State’s landlocked salmon and wild and native brook trout populations. Second, to determine the effects of competition with other fish species, including the effects of competition resulting from stocking over wild and native trout and salmon populations. Lastly, to address the reduction in the number of older landlocked salmon that originated from hatcheries and to report these findings to the Joint Standing Committee by January 15, 2014.

The previous Coldwater Working Group worked in conjunction with the department to update the department’s goals and objectives for landlocked salmon for the planning period 2012 – 2022. On January 20, 2012 the department presented a report to the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Legislative Committee on LD 1329 – A RESOLVE TO STUDY THE CONDITION OF THE LANDLOCKED SALMON IN MAINE AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH.

The department recently established two public working groups designed to address these, and similar issues, for both landlocked salmon and brook trout. The current Landlocked Salmon and Brook Trout public working groups continue to address biological and social issues concerning the approach which the department utilizes and manages both brook trout and landlocked salmon. Many of these issues are complex and are not easily resolved. Both public working groups facilitate discussion and provide a diverse, state-wide perspective to our fisheries management planning process.

Assessing the State's potential to increase and attain greater economic benefit from the State's landlocked salmon and wild and native brook trout populations require special skills. This task would be better addressed by economists who specialize in assessing economic benefits derived from recreational fishing and changes in fishing opportunities that result from regulation changes. Our Fisheries Division will not be able to provide a comprehensive report of the economic benefits/drawbacks of fisheries management strategies.

The Fisheries Division continues to assess competition between wild, native and stocked game fish species. Due to the large number of salmon and brook trout waters within the State it is impossible to accurately assess the impacts between stocked and wild fish for each lake on an annual basis. In addition, there are a number of competing fisheries needs, waters, and angler interests that require attention. The department continues to focus the majority of our research efforts on our most important wild and native fish waters.

Our Landlocked Salmon Working Group continues to discuss the issue of hatchery raised salmon that are stocked into our lakes and ponds. The ages of our landlocked salmon do not appear to live beyond 10 years. Due to intense angling and predation on many of our landlocked salmon waters we are not surprised. There are concerns expressed at the Landlocked Salmon Group meetings that hatchery fish may not thrive as well compared to wild salmon or salmon raised in the hatchery in past years. The Landlocked Salmon Group continues to address the issue of age structure in our salmon populations. The working group will have an opportunity to make recommendations to the department on what steps they believe will help grow landlocked salmon to older ages in our principle salmon waters.

It is our concern that this resolve will place an additional work load on our biological and administrative staff and further remove us from the common goal of managing fisheries resources to the best of our ability. Our recommendation is to continue to work toward the goals and objectives of LD 679 through both the Landlocked and Brook Trout public working groups.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.